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TAGS: [PREL](#) [CU](#) [VE](#) [KO](#) [AF](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: FM KUBIS ON AFGHANISTAN, KOSOVO, CUBA, VENEZUELA
-- AND FICO

REF: A. STATE 4834

[1](#)B. STATE 5652

Classified By: DCM Lawrence R. Silverman for reasons 1.4 b and d.

Afghanistan

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador delivered message in ref A to Foreign Minister Jan Kubis on January 17. Kubis told the Ambassador that Prime Minister Robert Fico still planned to travel to Kandahar, Afghanistan on January 25. Kubis would then travel to the January 26 Informal NATO Ministerial. Although Kubis would not say so definitively, all indications are that Fico will use the opportunity to announce that Slovakia will comply with NATO's request to relocate its troops to Kandahar, and also to participate in the Hungarian (later Czech) PRT. HZDS Vice-Chair Milan Urbani told the Ambassador that the coalition council (three governing parties) had already agreed to the move. Fico had previously invited the Ambassador to accompany him to Afghanistan. Kubis informed the Ambassador that the GOS had decided it would be more prudent to take the U.S. Defense Attache instead. (Comment: So that Fico would be seen taking the decision himself, not under pressure from a foreigner.)

Kosovo

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador also reiterated ref B points on Kosovo. Kubis promised that PolDir Miroslav Lajcak would give us a detailed briefing (DCM will meet him on January 18) on his recent meetings with Tadic and Kostunica. He said his main message to the Serbs was that Belgrade should not count on EU disunity; the EU countries "know how to compromise" (i.e. to reach internal consensus). Since PM Fico and President Gasparovic have been less supportive of Ahtisaari and the prospect of independence, Ambassador asked Kubis if they were also on board. Kubis paused before saying, "in the end, they will support it," although we might hear some nationalist comments from the two that do not accord with our view.

Venezuela

[1](#)3. (C) Kubis said he had convinced Fico not to go to Venezuela, as had been rumored in the press, bluntly asking if Fico wanted to see photos of himself next to Hugo Chavez and Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad plastered all over the international media.

Cuba

[1](#)4. (C) Staff from the Prime Minister's office have told us

that Fico has made it standard practice to attend as many embassy national day receptions as possible. Nonetheless, his appearance at the Cuban embassy on January 12 created an uproar, and was a departure from past MFA policy of representation at the office director level. Kubis told the Ambassador he had tried to dissuade Fico from attending, but was not successful, and said Fico had been genuinely surprised at the critical reaction of the media. (Comment: If he was surprised, it was only because of bad staff work--a real problem here. On the other hand, Fico's popularity rating among Slovak citizens is higher than ever, and higher than the previous government ever enjoyed.)

Comment: No Change in Foreign Policy?

15. (C) Kubis tried to assure the Ambassador that Slovakia's policy to Cuba had not changed. The Slovak Ambassador in Havana has clear instructions to continue engaging with dissidents, and Slovak Ambassador to Washington Rastislav Kacer will make a statement in support of human rights on Radio Marti along with the Czech Ambassador. At a dinner hosted by the Ambassador January 16, Deputy Prime Minister Dusan Caplovic said that acts such as Fico's impending trip to Libya (now postponed until February) were counterweighted by acts such as his own attendance at conferences on the Holocaust and other human rights events. Caplovic explained that in this way Slovakia could maintain a "balanced" foreign policy, staying within the limits of EU norms. Fico's Chief of Protocol recently told the DCM that the PM was still "developing" and that it took time for leaders to move from the domestic realm to considering their international commitments. Unfortunately, Fico's foreign policy moves still appear more "schizophrenic" than "balanced." All that said, we intend to use the PM's attendance at the Cuban event to influence the GOS to take further steps to demonstrate its pro-democracy bona fides on the issue.

VALLEE